



Indiana Rivers Rally 2007 Conference Evaluation Summary

Reported by Brent Ladd, Center for the Environment, Purdue University
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The first-ever Indiana Rivers Rally was a resounding success. More than 180 participants from throughout the state and beyond came together on the Purdue University campus and surrounding rivers for three days of education, collaboration, and celebration (June 7-9). The Rivers Rally created a unique forum where all participants joined together to increase their collective capacity for water resource protection, improvement, and recreational opportunities. Collaborative opportunities abounded - professional conservationists networked with citizen volunteers, water scientists made connections with grassroots organizations, and recreational enthusiasts celebrated with agency representatives.

Short-term Impacts

We learned about the state of our rivers including water quality, fish and non-game species diversity and health, recreational opportunities, history and culture of Indiana's rivers, and the economic impact of our waterways. Governor Mitch Daniels proclaimed June as "Indiana Rivers Month," partly as a result of the excitement surrounding the first-ever Indiana Rivers Rally.



*Wabash canoe trip lead by
the Quiatenon Voyagers*

We were inspired by national award winning authors Tim Palmer and James Alexander Thom. The Rivers Rally recognized the first Indiana Rivers Heroes for Research, Education, and Advocacy categories. We canoed the historic Wabash River and floated the state scenic river, Wildcat Creek raising awareness about the value of these important waterways. Some participants even stayed an extra day to lend a hand for a River Clean Sweep as part of National River Cleanup week.

Comments received throughout the week and following the event have shown that many of the participants are eager to build upon the momentum created at the Rivers

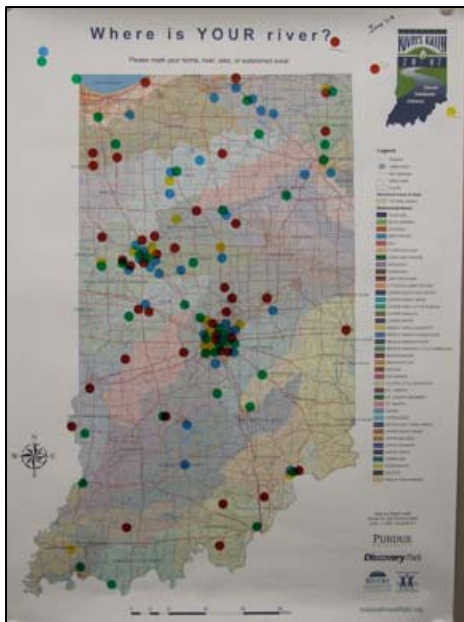
Rally by developing a positive vision for the future of Indiana's water resources.

Longer-term Impacts

The energy and momentum generated during the Rivers Rally has spilled over into several taskforces that will explore the potential for creating a statewide rivers alliance organization that will: 1) Serve the more than 70 river and conservation groups in Indiana, 2) Plan for a future Rivers Rally that will enable Indiana residents to continue participating in educational and collaborative forums, and 3) Develop Web-based networking tools for use by river groups and others throughout the state. Updates, media coverage, and discussion forums will continue through the Indiana Rivers Rally Web pages (<http://www.indianariversrally.org>).

Attendee Evaluations

A thirty-member (25 organizations) planning committee was led by Rivers Institute at Hanover College and the Center for the Environment at Purdue University, along with committee chairs from Hoosier Riverwatch (IDNR), Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission (IDNR), Indiana Paddlers Rendezvous, Earth Force, V3 Companies, and Hoosier Environmental Council. This committee created an exciting event program that included forty talks, fourteen skills workshops, five educational field trips, and plenary session topics including “Where from here: Forming an Indiana Rivers Alliance organization”, “State of Indiana Rivers”, and “Rivers Rock Around the World: Global Issues”. Participants were asked to evaluate the sessions they attended, and to provide comments and suggestions regarding the event, in general. Of all evaluations received, 97% of the respondents said their expectations were met by the conference. Fully **100%** of respondents said they would participate in a future Indiana Rivers Rally, and they would also recommend attendance to others.



Attendees came from many points of the state and beyond.

Comments from participant evaluation forms include:

“The culture, education, and research presented combined with the unity of passion from the attendees resulted in a vision for cleaner rivers.” – Nancy Brown

“The best of the Rally resulted in networking and learning from those who are changing and raising the bar on environmental initiatives for clean water.” – Amy Brown

“I heard so many new and different presentations from people I would never have met or heard from otherwise. Great networking opportunities.” - Cindy Baker

“The Rally provided for a vast array of groups, many small and recreational in nature, to go along with the more typical technical and commercial conference attendees.” – Rally participant.

“This was wonderful! It is so energizing and encouraging to be around people who are doing what they can to make a difference.” - Rally participant

“The great hands-on workshops, river trips, and tremendous speakers gave me goose bumps!” – Rally participant.

“WELL DONE!” One of the best conferences I’ve attended – on any topic!” – Rally participant